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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON SYRIA

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, September 14, carry reports on the oil price hikes in the world market and its effects on Jordan. Another lead story focuses on King Abdullah's activities and remarks on the sidelines of his participation in the World Summit in New York. All papers highlight President Bush's "warning" to Syria that it will be increasingly isolated if it fails to control its borders with Iraq.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Damascus and the tightening cordons of isolation and siege"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (09/14): "The noose around the Syrian leadership's neck is tightening.. On one hand, Meles has taken his first steps towards the making of another 'Lockerbie scenario' in Syria, since information indicates that he suspects the involvement of four Syrian generals in the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Hariri. On the other hand, Iraqi-American statements that condemn Syria and threaten its regime are on the rise . and Damascus seems to be the preoccupation of Washington and its Iraqi allies. A third issue is the ongoing stories from the Syrian opposition about the deteriorating status of the regime, from talk of arrests that include high level army and security officers to rumors of an imminent military coup.. The point is that Syria's situation is very intricate and complicated.. Before Hariri's assassination, we used to say that the major dangers that face Syria come from the inside, and that the regime needs to start making concessions for the benefit of its own people, as opposed to foreigners. Today, however, and after the assassination and the repercussions of the Iraqi situation, the volume of concessions that the regime is required to make have become heavier than Syria's structure can withstand. Meles' idea is snowballing and Washington, being wounded from Baghdad and New Orleans, may be more ferocious in the days to come."

-- "Enough of the destructive lies"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm (09/14): "The U.S. administration's lie-producing factories insist on producing and marketing their lies in the Middle East in a sickly manner that only serves to expand the circle of terrorism, murder, and wars. This is an expression of this administration's bankruptcy and the policies lacking in morality out of Afghanistan, through Iraq and to New Orleans. The most recent lies are those threats made by the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq against Syria, during which he hinted at the military option. This indicates that the Bush administration may resort to expanding the circle of war from Talafr to Syria amidst pressures from the Iraqi resistance and from the feeling of helplessness in achieving a clear victory at a time when criticism escalates against Bush following Hurricane Katrina and calls for withdrawing the U.S. troops from Iraq. It is easy to blame others. This is the policy of the Bush administration.. We had hoped that the U.S. Ambassador would learn from Colin Powell's regret after having fallen victim to deception over the invasion of Iraq, and to think of how to rid the United States of its role as an occupying and destructive force in Iraq and of how to turn this role into a force that corrects mistakes, wipes away the effects of the destructive lies and restores peace and stability to the bereft country. But it seems that the U.S. Ambassador is keen on managing wars from Afghanistan to Iraq and now he is looking for another war with Syria.

HALE